

# The Crackpot Index

John Baez

## Contents

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Fair Use Notice .....   | 1 |
| The Crackpot Index..... | 1 |
| References .....        | 2 |

## Fair Use Notice

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## The Crackpot Index

*A simple method for rating potentially revolutionary contributions to physics:*

1. A -5 point starting credit.
2. 1 point for every statement that is widely agreed on to be false.
3. 2 points for every statement that is clearly vacuous.
4. 3 points for every statement that is logically inconsistent.
5. 5 points for each such statement that is adhered to despite careful correction.
6. 5 points for using a thought experiment that contradicts the results of a widely accepted real experiment.
7. 5 points for each word in all capital letters (except for those with defective keyboards).
8. 5 points for each mention of "Einstien", "Hawkins" or "Feynmann".
9. 10 points for each claim that quantum mechanics is fundamentally misguided (without good evidence).
10. 10 points for pointing out that you have gone to school, as if this were evidence of sanity.
11. 10 points for beginning the description of your theory by saying how long you have been working on it. (10 more for emphasizing that you worked on your own.)
12. 10 points for mailing your theory to someone you don't know personally and asking them not to tell anyone else about it, for fear that your ideas will be stolen.
13. 10 points for offering prize money to anyone who proves and/or finds any flaws in your theory.
14. 10 points for each new term you invent and use without properly defining it.
15. 10 points for each statement along the lines of "I'm not good at math, but my theory is conceptually right, so all I need is for someone to express it in terms of equations".
16. 10 points for arguing that a current well-established theory is "only a theory", as if this were somehow a point against it.
17. 10 points for arguing that while a current well-established theory predicts phenomena correctly, it doesn't explain "why" they occur, or fails to provide a "mechanism".
18. 10 points for each favorable comparison of yourself to Einstein, or claim that special or general relativity are fundamentally misguided (without good evidence).
19. 10 points for claiming that your work is on the cutting edge of a "paradigm shift".
20. 20 points for emailing me and complaining about the crackpot index. (E.g., saying that it "suppresses original thinkers" or saying that I misspelled "Einstein" in item 8.)
21. 20 points for suggesting that you deserve a Nobel prize.

22. 20 points for each favorable comparison of yourself to Newton or claim that classical mechanics is fundamentally misguided (without good evidence).
23. 20 points for every use of science fiction works or myths as if they were fact.
24. 20 points for defending yourself by bringing up (real or imagined) ridicule accorded to your past theories.
25. 20 points for naming something after yourself. (E.g., talking about the "The Evans Field Equation" when your name happens to be Evans.)
26. 20 points for talking about how great your theory is, but never actually explaining it.
27. 20 points for each use of the phrase "hidebound reactionary".
28. 20 points for each use of the phrase "self-appointed defender of the orthodoxy".
29. 30 points for suggesting that a famous figure secretly disbelieved in a theory which he or she publicly supported. (E.g., that Feynman was a closet opponent of special relativity, as deduced by reading between the lines in his freshman physics textbooks.)
30. 30 points for suggesting that Einstein, in his later years, was groping his way towards the ideas you now advocate.
31. 30 points for claiming that your theories were developed by an extraterrestrial civilization (without good evidence).
32. 30 points for allusions to a delay in your work while you spent time in an asylum, or references to the psychiatrist who tried to talk you out of your theory.
33. 40 points for comparing those who argue against your ideas to Nazis, stormtroopers, or brownshirts.
34. 40 points for claiming that the "scientific establishment" is engaged in a "conspiracy" to prevent your work from gaining its well-deserved fame, or suchlike.
35. 40 points for comparing yourself to Galileo, suggesting that a modern-day Inquisition is hard at work on your case, and so on.
36. 40 points for claiming that when your theory is finally appreciated, present-day science will be seen for the sham it truly is. (30 more points for fantasizing about show trials in which scientists who mocked your theories will be forced to recant.)
37. 50 points for claiming you have a revolutionary theory but giving no concrete testable predictions.

## References

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